

REMARKS

Claims 2-5 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claim 4 is amended. Support for the amendments to claim 4 can be found in the specification as originally filed, for example, at page 4, lines 14-16; at page 10, line 36 - page 11, line 6; at page 13, lines 24-28; and at page 15, lines 1-5; and in original claim 4. No new matter is added by these amendments.

I. Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103

The Office Action rejects claims 2-4 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 5,952,079 to Andou et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,776,998 to Davidson et al. and U.S. Patent No. 4,622,057 to Chyung et al., and optionally in view of U.S. Patent No. 3,731,036 to Hallier et al. The Office Action also rejects claim 5 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Andou, Davidson, Chyung and Hallier, as applied to claim 4, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 3,187,574 to Mason et al. or U.S. Patent No. 4,311,150 to Darringer et al. Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections.

Independent claim 4 sets forth, in pertinent part, a "method of fabricating at least a ceramic honeycomb body including a multiplicity of cells, ... comprising drying at least an extrusion-molded argillaceous honeycomb body by exposing ... to a high-humidity ambience of not less than 70 % in humidity; and irradiating ... with microwaves having a frequency of 1,000 to 10,000 MHz; wherein ... during drying, the honeycomb body is placed on a conveyance tray having a porosity of not less than 10%." Claims 2, 3 and 5 depend from and incorporate all of the limitations of claim 4.

The method of claim 4 requires that the ceramic honeycomb body is placed on a conveyance tray having a porosity of not less than 10% during drying. This requirement, as part of the claimed method, allows a high-humidity environment to be maintained during drying. Specifically, the claimed conveyance trays allow humidity in the form of steam to be

provided to the ceramic honeycomb body, while simultaneously preventing water stagnation and elution. *See* Specification, page 4, lines 1-16; page 10, line 36 - page 11, line 13; page 13, lines 28-30; page 15, lines 1-5. By maintaining a high-humidity environment during microwave irradiation heating, similar conditions in the cells and on the outer skin portion of the ceramic honeycomb body are maintained, and similar drying speeds may be obtained. Thus, the claimed method prevents defects in the thinner skin portions of the ceramic honeycomb body and avoids problems, such as dielectric breakdown and undesirable discharge.

However, none of the cited references provides any teachings or suggestions regarding the use of conveyance trays during drying or the benefits that can be obtained by placing ceramic honeycomb bodies onto conveyance trays having a porosity of not less than 10% during drying. *See generally* Andou; Davidson; Chyung; Hallier; Mason; Darringer.

At least because none of the Andou, Davidson, Chyung, Hallier, Mason and Darringer references teaches or suggests that "during drying, the honeycomb body is placed on a conveyance tray having a porosity of not less than 10%," as set forth in claim 4, the combination of these references cannot support a rejection of claim 4 or its dependent claims.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that independent claim 4 and dependent claims 2, 3 and 5 are patentable over the Andou, Davidson, Chyung, Hallier, Mason and Darringer references, individually and in combination. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

II. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 2-5 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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